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STATE MENTAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT IMPLEMENTS NEW TREATMENT MALL CONCEPT AT METROPOLITAN STATE HOSPITAL

SACRAMENTO – Metropolitan State Hospital (MSH) in Norwalk has implemented the Biopsychosocial Rehabilitation Treatment Mall, an innovative advancement in the treatment of patients in large psychiatric institutions in California. Patients participate in a holistic approach to treatment that helps them set goals for recovery while more closely imitating life in the community.

“This recovery model concept is a significant culture change for both patients and clinical staff because the traditional role of providers as ‘all knowing’ is replaced with a system in which staff assist, mentor and collaborate with patients who are actively engaged in their own recovery instead of being passive recipients of services,” said Stephen W. Mayberg, Ph.D., director of the California Department of Mental Health (DMH).

The Treatment Mall is a separate location on the grounds of MSH where staff and patients from multiple residential units come together to provide and receive mental health services. The services provided through classes are designed to teach daily life skills, vocational training, education and social skills that will strengthen and empower the patient toward recovery and transition back into the community.

“The patient is able to focus on his or her treatment plan, while staff focus on patient recovery and what a patient needs to achieve life’s goals. Staff are drawn to the potential of the individual as opposed to identifying the patient by his or her illness,” said Dr. Mayberg.

MSH’s program is modeled after the State of Virginia Treatment Mall experience, which DMH staff studied in 2002.

The Treatment Mall model allows a patient to work with a treatment team to define a life goal through a treatment plan. The patient then chooses classes that will help develop the skills that will move him or her toward the goal of returning to the community. At the same time, the patient’s quality of life in the hospital is enhanced. A goal can range from the desire to have a job and live independently in the community to learning how to take public transportation and live at home.

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Patients attend three to four 50-minute classes offered Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the Treatment Mall. The hospital's staff – clinical and non-clinical -serve as instructors and/or monitors. A sample of classes includes: Basic Life Skills, Learning to Care for Self, Exercise and Fitness, Relationships, Domestic Skills, Medication Management, Music & Stress Management, Anger Management, Special Needs, Motivation, Discharge Planning, Computer Skills, Substance Abuse, Know Your Treatment, Communication Skills, Career Education and a host of others. There are a total of 457 classes.

MSH opened two Treatment Malls in February and March 2003 that currently serve 214 adult men and women. A children's Treatment Mall will open later this month, and a total of six malls will be in operation for all patients by fall 2003. DMH plans to implement malls in three other state hospitals – Atascadero, Napa and Patton - in the future. MSH's shift to this mode of treatment was done at minimal cost to the state.

“Although we are still in the evolutionary stage of MSH's Treatment Mall, the hospital has already experienced dramatic decreases in patient to patient negative interactions, calls for Hospital Police Officers to assist treatment units have decreased by 60 percent and the use of seclusion and restraints has gone down by 84 percent,” said Dr. Mayberg.

Persons referred to state hospitals are from county mental health programs or committed by the courts as Judicially Committed Penal Code Patients. They suffer from a variety of major mental illnesses, such as schizophrenia, major depression, obsessive-compulsive behavior and a number of anxiety disorders. Patients are acutely ill and their level of psychiatric impairment ranges from moderate to severe. The goal of the state hospital is to restore the patient to a prior highest level of functioning so the patient can be discharged back into the community.

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